

THE LAW

When it comes to alcohol, the law for operating a motorboat is nearly the same as for a motor vehicle. The presumptive level for being under the influence of alcohol is 0.08 BAC. No person is allowed to operate a watercraft under the influence of alcohol, narcotic drugs, or other self-administered intoxicants or drugs.

Virginia has a "Zero Tolerance" for anyone under 21 years of age. It is unlawful for any person under the age of 21 to operate a boat after consuming alcohol.

The penalty for conviction of Operating Under the Influence (OUI) is as much as one year in jail and/or a \$2,500 fine, a loss of the privilege of operating a watercraft for 12 months, and/or mandatory enrollment in the Alcohol Safety Action Program certified by the Commission on the Alcohol Safety Action Program (VASAP). All convictions are reported to the Department of Motor Vehicles.

BOAT WITHOUT ALCOHOL

Contrary to popular belief, most boaters do not take alcohol with them while on the water. A recent survey suggests that nearly 3 out of every 4 boaters would rather spend the day on the water without the worry of having alcohol onboard the boat.

WEAR A LIFE JACKET

It is estimated that nearly 80% of all drowning victims would have survived had they been wearing a life jacket. Even strong swimmers may drown if they end up in the water.

Life jackets float, you don't!

BOATING SAFETY EDUCATION

Taking a boating safety course is the best way to learn the safe and legal rules of operating a vessel on the water. Call 1-804-367-1125 or visit the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) web site for a listing of available courses.

VDGIF Web Site:
www.dgif.state.va.us

TO REPORT WILDLIFE VIOLATIONS

PHONE

1-800-237-5712

or email: wildcrime@dgif.state.va.us

*For all other suspicious activities contact your
local Police or Sheriff's Department.*

The Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries shall afford to all persons an equal access to Department programs and facilities without regard to race, color, religion, national origin, disability, sex or age. If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, please write to: VA. Dept. of Game and Inland Fisheries, ATTN: Compliance Officer, 4010 West Broad St. Richmond, VA 23230-1104

For more information or for information on forming a Wildlife Crime Watch contact your local Game Warden.

WILDLIFE CRIME WATCH

BOATING SAFETY –

OPERATING WITHOUT THE INFLUENCE OF DRUGS AND ALCOHOL



BOATING AND INTOXICANTS ARE A "DEADLY MIX"

A PARTNERSHIP FOR WILDLIFE, THE ENVIRONMENT, PROPERTY AND PEOPLE

INTRODUCTION

Water activities and intoxicants do not mix. It does not matter whether you are swimming, boating, water skiing, or fishing. These activities are for recreation and enjoyment. However, because they occur in, on and around water, they require special attention. Using alcohol and/or drugs makes these activities dangerous. If you do use intoxicants, *do not go near the water*.

SAFE BOATING

Safe boating requires good vision, good coordination and the ability to react swiftly. Boating traffic comes from all directions, and floating obstacles can suddenly appear without warning. Driving a boat requires the full attention of the operator, as there can be numerous distractions on the water.

BOATING STRESS FACTORS

Boaters are exposed to significant "stressors." These are wind, sun, glare, noise, motion from the water, and vibration. Research has proven that as little as four hours of exposure to these stressors produces "boater's hypnosis." Boater's hypnosis is a type of fatigue that slows operator reaction time comparable to that exhibited by an intoxicated person.

PROBLEMS WITH ALCOHOL USE

A recent study conducted in four southeastern states of boating accidents estimated alcohol was a contributing factor in 51% of motorboat *fatalities* in these states. Most subjects were males, 21 to 40 years of age, in small open motorboats and non-powered craft. A significant finding of this study was that *passengers* had the same risk of dying as the driver, regardless of whether the boat was underway.

According to the U. S. Coast Guard, a boat operator with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) above 0.10 is more than **10** times as likely to be killed in a boating accident than an operator who has consumed no alcohol.

ALCOHOL - WHAT IT DOES

- Alcohol is the most commonly abused drug in the United States.
- Alcohol **can** cause both temporary and permanent brain injuries. It affects memory, problem solving, judgement, behavior, insight, understanding of pain and pleasure, coordination, and the regulation of body functions.
- It is a depressant. One of the body functions it depresses is the natural gag reflex. This can lead to drowning due to the body's natural gag reflex being depressed (relaxed).
- Alcohol impairs an individual's sense of balance (equilibrium). A moment of dizziness or a miss-step can be fatal on or near the water. Most drownings occur from falls overboard or capsizing.
- Alcohol slows reaction time. You cannot react as fast to stimuli.
- Alcohol does not follow normal digestive patterns. It is absorbed directly into the blood stream, and the effects are usually apparent within minutes.
- It impairs an individual's judgement and coordination. Both of these elements are absolutely essential for safe boating. You may think you are functioning normally, but you are not.

THE RISK OF DROWNING

There is strong evidence that the use of alcohol can severely impair an individual's ability to swim.

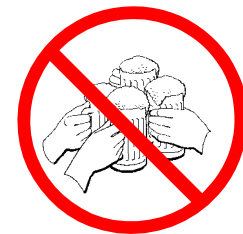
Alcohol reduces a person's ability to swim by:

- Making it more difficult to hold their breath.
- Suppressing the natural gag reflex.
- Disorienting those in the water.
- Diminishing coordination and strength.

For these reasons, some people who are consuming alcohol may actually swim down instead of up.

RISK TO PASSENGERS

A study completed in 2001 shows that boating **passengers** are more likely to die in a boating accident than the operator. Many passengers believe they can drink as much as they want as long as the operator stays sober. In reality, passengers are at risk regardless of whether the operator is consuming alcohol or not. This is not only related to crashes, but to falls overboard and capsizing as well.



With the inherent dangers of being on the water, passengers falling out of boats are at risk of drowning. Walking the shoreline close to the water, or walking on docks or piers can be hazardous for those using intoxicants.